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Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
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Youth Justice (Boot Camp  
Orders) & Other Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2012  
Submission 045

Dear Mr Chair

**Attention - Mr. Ray Hopper MP, Chair**

Please consider this submission in your report on the Youth Justice (Boot Camp Orders) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Clause 50, Insertion of section 106C into the Anti-discrimination Act 1991.

Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council (NTAHC) Inc is strongly opposed to the proposed changes to the Anti-discrimination Act, which legalise discrimination against sex workers in relation to access to accommodation in Queensland.

The NATHC Health and Community Development Officer in Alice Springs has extensively assessed the impact of these changes on our community. One of the services our organisation provides is the Sex Worker Outreach Program, through which we work with both local and travelling sex workers. Many of the sex workers who access our service also travel through, and work in Queensland and I am concerned about the negative impact of the proposed changes on the health, safety and well-being of these people.

The Queensland Anti Discrimination Act 1991 states that the Parliament's reason for the Act is that the international community has long recognised the need to protect and preserve the principles of dignity and equality for everyone. It also posits that the quality of democratic life is improved by an educated community appreciative and respectful of the dignity and worth of everyone.

Excising sex workers from the full protection of this Act is an assault to their human rights and sends the message to both the workers and the community that sex workers are undeserving of dignity and equality. This will erode the self worth and self esteem of sex workers and undermine their ability to assert their rights to health, safety and happiness. It will also serve to further demonise sex workers in the eyes of the general community and disempower them to respond to prejudice.

Despite being engaged in a legal and valuable profession, sex workers are already heavily marginalised and stigmatised in our society. To increase and legally sanction the discrimination faced by sex workers will compound this. This leads to less access to resources including health and support services.

The proposed changes also leave sex workers vulnerable to acute safety concerns. Many sex workers travel to and work in places far from home. Being evicted from paid accommodation at any time of the day or night could leave people stranded and at risk of violence. Legalising the unfavourable treatment of a person for being a sex worker increases the opportunity for an accommodation provider to abuse or exploit a worker who is seeking accommodation. Being unable to work from a hotel or motel may force sex workers into working in an environment they have less control over, such as from the street, or in a clients home. While many sex workers find street based or outcall work preferable, this decision should be based on personal choice, not necessity.

The sex workers I know and work with are not anti-social nuisances. They are valuable members of the community and they deserve to be treated as such. It is in the best interests of the sex worker to carry out their business quietly and discreetly and I do not believe there is any evidence to support denying sex workers equal access to safe accommodation services.

I urge you to consider the voices of sex workers and their supporters as you consider making this amendment to the Act. I urge you to make decisions based on evidence, with consideration for the principles of public health and human rights. I urge you to allow the Anti-discrimination Act to continue to function as an instrument to protect the rights of ALL people and to work towards an equal, fair and respectful community.

Please contact Merryn Kellie, the NTAHC Health and Community Development Officer, on [REDACTED] if additional information regarding this submission is needed.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Craig Cooper', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

**Craig Cooper**  
Executive Director

8 November 2012